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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TAGORE'S POEMS

The appearance of the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, translated by himself from Bengali into English, is an event in the history of English poetry and of world poetry. I do not use these terms with the looseness of contemporary journalism. Questions of poetic art are serious, not to be touched upon lightly or in a spirit of bravura.

Bengal is a nation of fifty million people. The great age of Bengali literature is this age in which we live. And the first Bengali whom I heard singing the lyrics of Tagore said, as simply as one would say it is four o'clock, "Yes, we speak of it as the Age of Rabindranath."

The six poems now published were chosen from a hundred lyrics about to appear in book form. They might just as well have been any other six, for they do not represent a summit of attainment but an average.

These poems are cast, in the original, in metres perhaps the most finished and most subtle of any known to us. If you refine the art of the troubadours, combine it with that of the Pleiade, and add to that the sound-unit principle of the most advanced artists in *vers libre*, you would get something like the system of Bengali verse. The sound of it when spoken is rather like good Greek, for Bengali is daughter of Sanscrit, which is a kind of uncle or elder brother of the Homeric idiom.

All this series of a hundred poems are made to music, for "Mr." Tagore is not only the great poet of Bengal,

he is also their great musician. He teaches his songs, and they are sung throughout Bengal more or less as the troubadours' songs were sung through Europe in the twelfth century.

And we feel here in London, I think, much as the people of Petrarch's time must have felt about the mysterious lost language, the Greek that was just being restored to Europe after centuries of deprivation. That Greek was the lamp of our renaissance and its perfections have been the goal of our endeavor ever since.

I speak with all seriousness when I say that this beginning of our more intimate intercourse with Bengal is the opening of another period. For one thing the content of this first brief series of poems will destroy the popular conception of Buddhism, for we in the occident are apt to regard it as a religion negative and anti-Christian.

The Greek gave us humanism; a belief in *mens sana in corpore sano*, a belief in proportion and balance. The Greek shows us man as the sport of the gods; the sworn foe of fate and the natural forces. The Bengali brings to us the pledge of a calm which we need overmuch in an age of steel and mechanics. It brings a quiet proclamation of the fellowship between man and the gods; between man and nature.

It is all very well to object that this is not the first time we have had this fellowship proclaimed, but in the arts alone can we find the inner heart of a people. There

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is a deeper calm and a deeper conviction in this eastern expression than we have yet attained. It is by the arts alone that one people learns to meet another far distant people in friendship and respect.

I speak with all gravity when I say that world-fellowship is nearer for the visit of Rabindranath Tagore to London.

Ezra Pound

REVIEWS

The Poems of Rosamund Marriott Watson (John Lane.)

This English poet, whose singing ceased a year ago, had a real lyric gift, though a very slight one. The present volume is a collection of all her poems, from the first girlish sheaf *Tares*, to *The Lamp and the Lute*, which she was preparing for publication when she died.

Through this whole life-record her poetry ripples along as smoothly and delicately as a meadow rill, with never a pause nor a flurry nor a thrill. She sings prettily of everyone, from the *Last Fairy* to William Ernest Henley, and of everything, from *Death and Justice* to the *Orchard of the Moon*, but she has nothing arresting or important to say of any of these subjects, and no keen magic of phrase to give her warbling that intense vitality which would win for her the undying fame prophesied by her loyal husband in his preface.

Nevertheless, her feeling is genuine, her touch light, and her tune a quiet monotone of gentle soothing music which has a certain soft appeal. Perhaps the secret of